Bruce Lee

Lee Jun-fan (Chinese: 李振藩; November 27, 1940 – July 20, 1973), commonly known as **Bruce Lee** (Chinese: 李小龍), was a Chinese-American martial artist, actor, director, martial arts instructor and philosopher.[2] He was the founder of Jeet Kune Do, a hybrid martial arts philosophy drawing from different combat disciplines that is often credited with paving the way for modern mixed martial arts (MMA). Lee

is considered by commentators, critics, media, and other martial artists to be the most influential martial artist of all time and a pop culture icon of the 20th century, who bridged the gap between East and West. He is credited with helping to change the way Asians were presented in American films.[3]

Bruce Lee	
李小龍	
 Lee in the 1971 film *The Big Boss*	
Born	Lee Jun-fan 李振藩 November 27, 1940 San Francisco, California, U.S.
Died	July 20, 1973 (aged 32)

	Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong
Cause of death	Cerebral edema
Resting place	Lake View Cemetery, Seattle, Washington, U.S.
Other names	Bruce Lee Siu-Lung, Lee Yuen-cham, Lee Yuen-kam
Citizenship	United States Hong Kong[1]
Alma mater	University of Washington
Occupation	Martial artist · philosopher · actor · director ·

	screenwriter · producer
Years active	1941–1973
Spouse(s)	Linda Emery (m. 1964)
Children	Brandon Lee (son), Shannon Lee (daughter)
Parents	Lee Hoi-chuen (father) Grace Ho (mother)
Family	Peter Lee (brother) Robert Lee (brother)
Chinese name	
Traditional Chinese	李小龍
Simplified Chinese	李小龙

Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	Lǐ Xiǎolóng
Yue: Cantonese	
Jyutping	Lei5 Siu2 Lung4

Lee Jun-fan

Chinese	李振藩

Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	Lǐ Zhènfān
Yue: Cantonese	
Jyutping	Lei5 Zan3 Faan4

Website	Bruce Lee Foundation

Signature


The son of Cantonese opera star Lee Hoi-chuen, Lee was born in the Chinatown area of San Francisco, on November 27, 1940, to parents from Hong Kong, and was raised with his family in Kowloon, Hong Kong.[4] He was introduced to the film industry by his father and appeared in several films as a child actor. Lee moved to the United States at the age of 18 to receive his higher education at the University of Washington in Seattle,[5] and it was during this time that he began teaching martial arts. His Hong Kong and

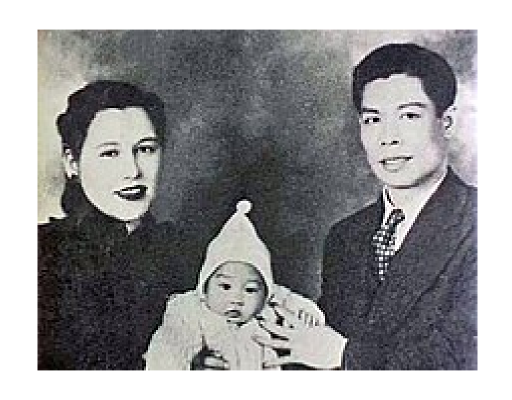
Hollywood-produced films elevated the traditional martial arts film to a new level of popularity and acclaim, sparking a surge of interest in the Chinese nation and Chinese martial arts in the West in the 1970s. The direction and tone of his films dramatically influenced and changed martial arts and martial arts films worldwide.[6]

He is noted for his roles in five feature-length martial arts films in the early 1970s: Lo Wei's *The Big Boss* (1971) and *Fist of Fury* (1972); Golden Harvest's *Way of the Dragon* (1972), directed and written by Lee; and Golden Harvest and Warner Brothers'

Enter the Dragon (1973) and *The Game of Death* (1978), both directed by Robert Clouse.[7] Lee became an iconic figure known throughout the world, particularly among the Chinese, based upon his portrayal of Chinese nationalism in his films[8] and among Asian Americans for defying stereotypes associated with the emasculated Asian male.[9] He trained in the art of Wing Chun and later combined his other influences from various sources into the spirit of his personal martial arts philosophy, which he dubbed Jeet Kune Do (The Way of the Intercepting Fist). Lee had residences in Hong Kong and Seattle.[10]

Lee died on July 20, 1973, at the age of 32. There was no visible external injury; however, according to autopsy reports, Lee's brain had swollen considerably. The autopsy found Equagesic in his system. When the doctors announced Lee's death, it was officially ruled a "death by misadventure". Since his death, Lee has continued to be a prominent influence on modern combat sport, including judo, karate, mixed martial arts, and boxing. *Time* named Lee one of the 100 most important people of the 20th century.

Early life



Bruce Lee as a baby with his parents, Grace Ho and Lee Hoi-chuen

Bruce Lee was born on November 27, 1940, at the Chinese Hospital in Chinatown, San Francisco. According to the Chinese zodiac, Lee was born in both the hour and the year of the Dragon, which according to tradition is a strong and fortuitous omen.[11] Lee and his parents returned to Hong Kong when he was three months old.[12] Bruce's father, Lee Hoi-

chuen, was Han Chinese, and his mother, Grace Ho (何愛瑜), was of Eurasian ancestry.[13]

Career and education

1940 to 1958: Early roles, schooling and martial arts initiation

Lee's father Lee Hoi-chuen was a famous Cantonese opera star. As a result, the junior Lee was introduced to the world of cinema at a very young age and appeared in several films as a child. Lee had his first role as a baby who was carried onto the stage in the film *Golden Gate Girl*.[14]

As a nine-year-old, he would co-star with his father in *The Kid* in 1950, which was based on a comic book character and was his first leading role.[15] By the time he was 18, he had appeared in twenty films.[11]

Bruce Lee in The Kid

After attending Tak Sun School (德信學校; several blocks from his home at 218 Nathan Road, Kowloon), Lee entered the

primary school division of the Catholic La Salle College at the age of 12.[16] In 1956, due to poor academic performance and possibly poor conduct, he was transferred to St. Francis Xavier's College, where he would be mentored by Brother Edward, a teacher and coach of the school boxing team.[17]

Lee and Yip Man

After Lee was involved in several street fights, his parents decided that he needed to be trained in the martial arts. Lee's friend William Cheung[18] introduced him to Ip Man but[19] he was rejected from learning Wing Chun Kung Fu under him because of the long standing rule in the Chinese Martial Arts world to not teach foreigners.[20] His one quarter German background from his mother's side would be an initial obstacle towards his Wing Chun training, however Cheung would speak on his behalf and Lee was accepted into the school.[21]Lee began training in Wing Chun with Yip Man.[22] Yip tried to keep his students from fighting in the

street gangs of Hong Kong by encouraging them to fight in organized competitions.[23] After a year into his Wing Chun training, most of Yip Man's other students refused to train with Lee when they had learned of his mixed ancestry, as the Chinese were generally against teaching their martial arts techniques to non-Asians.[24][25] Lee's sparring partner, Hawkins Cheung, states, "Probably fewer than six people in the whole Wing Chun clan were personally taught, or even partly taught, by Yip Man".[26] However, Lee showed a keen interest in Wing Chun and continued to train privately with Yip Man, William Cheung and Wong Shun Leung.[27]

William Cheung and Bruce Lee

In 1958, Bruce won the Hong Kong schools boxing tournament, knocking out the previous champion, Gary Elms, in the final.[17] That year, Lee was also a cha-cha dancer, winning Hong Kong's Crown Colony Cha-Cha Championship.[28]

1959 to 1964: Continuous studies

and martial arts breakthrough

Until his late teens, Lee's street fights became more frequent and included beating the son of a feared triad family.[29] In 1958, after students from Choy Li Fut, a rival martial arts school, challenged Lee's Wing Chun school, he engaged in a fight on a rooftop. In response to an unfair punch by another boy, Bruce beat him so badly that he knocked out one of his teeth, leading to a complaint by the boy's parents to the police. Lee's mother had to go to a police station and sign a document saying that she would take full responsibility for Bruce's actions if they released him into

her custody. Though she did not mention the incident to her husband, she suggested that Bruce, being an American citizen, return to the United States. Lee's father agreed, as Lee's college prospects were he to remain in Hong Kong were not very promising.[30]

> *The police detective came and he says "Excuse me Mr. Lee, your son is really fighting bad in school. If he gets into just one more fight I might have to put him in jail".*
>
> — *Robert Lee*[31]

In April 1959, Lee's parents decided to send him to the United States to stay with his older sister, Agnes Lee (李秋鳳), who was already living with family friends in San Francisco. After several months, he moved to Seattle in 1959 to continue his high school education, where he also worked for Ruby Chow as a live-in waiter at her restaurant. Chow's husband was a co-worker and friend of Lee's father. Lee's elder brother Peter Lee (李忠琛) would also join him in Seattle for a short stay before moving on to Minnesota to attend college. That year Lee also started to teach martial arts. He called what he taught Jun Fan Gung Fu (literally Bruce

Lee's Kung Fu). It was basically his approach to Wing Chun.[32] Lee taught friends he met in Seattle, starting with Judo practitioner Jesse Glover, who continued to teach some of Lee's early techniques. Taky Kimura became Lee's first Assistant Instructor and continued to teach his art and philosophy after Lee's death.[33] Lee opened his first martial arts school, named the Lee Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute, in Seattle.

In December 1960, Lee completed his high school education and received his diploma from Edison Technical School on Capitol Hill in Seattle.

In March 1961, Lee enrolled at the University of Washington and studied dramatic arts, philosophy, psychology, and various other subjects.[34][35] Despite what Lee himself and many others have stated, Lee's official major was drama rather than philosophy according to a 1999 article in the university's alumni publication.[36]

Lee dropped out of college in early 1964 and moved to Oakland to live with James Yimm Lee. James Lee was twenty years senior to Bruce Lee and a well-known Chinese martial artist in the area. Together, they founded the second Jun Fan martial arts studio in Oakland. James

Lee was also responsible for introducing Bruce Lee to Ed Parker, an American martial artist. At the invitation of Parker, Lee appeared in the 1964 Long Beach International Karate Championships and performed repetitions of two-finger push-ups (using the thumb and the index finger of one hand) with feet at approximately shoulder-width apart. In the same Long Beach event he also performed the "one inch punch."[37] Lee stood upright, his right foot forward with knees bent slightly, in front of a standing, stationary partner. Lee's right arm was partly extended and his right fist approximately one inch (2.5 cm) away from the partner's chest.

Without retracting his right arm, Lee then forcibly delivered the punch to volunteer Bob Baker while largely maintaining his posture, sending Baker backwards and falling into a chair said to be placed behind Baker to prevent injury, though Baker's momentum soon caused him to fall to the floor. Baker recalled, "I told Bruce not to do this type of demonstration again. When he punched me that last time, I had to stay home from work because the pain in my chest was unbearable".[38] It was at the 1964 championships that Lee first met Taekwondo master Jhoon Goo Rhee. The two developed a friendship—a relationship from which they benefited as martial

artists. Rhee taught Lee the side kick in detail, and Lee taught Rhee the "non-telegraphic" punch.[39] Rhee learned what he calls the "accupunch" from Lee and incorporated it into American taekwondo. The "accupunch" is a rapid fast punch that is very difficult to block, based on human reaction time—"the idea is to finish the execution of the punch before the opponent can complete the brain-to-wrist communication."[40]

In Oakland's Chinatown in 1964, Lee had a controversial private match with Wong Jack Man, a direct student of Ma Kin Fung, known for his mastery of Xingyiquan,

Northern Shaolin, and T'ai chi ch'uan. According to Lee, the Chinese community issued an ultimatum to him to stop teaching non-Chinese people. When he refused to comply, he was challenged to a combat match with Wong. The arrangement was that if Lee lost, he would have to shut down his school, while if he won, he would be free to teach white people, or anyone else.[41] Wong denied this, stating that he requested to fight Lee after Lee boasted during one of his demonstrations at a Chinatown theatre that he could beat anyone in San Francisco, and that Wong himself did not discriminate against Whites or other non-

Chinese people.[42] Lee commented, "That paper had all the names of the sifu from Chinatown, but they don't scare me".[43] Individuals known to have witnessed the match include Cadwell, James Lee (Bruce Lee's associate, no relation), and William Chen, a teacher of T'ai chi ch'uan. Wong and William Chen stated that the fight lasted an unusually long 20–25 minutes.[42][44] Wong claims that although he had originally expected a serious but polite bout, Lee aggressively attacked him with intent to kill. When Wong presented the traditional handshake, Lee appeared to accept the greeting, but instead, Lee allegedly thrust his hand as a spear aimed

at Wong's eyes. Forced to defend his life, Wong nonetheless asserted that he refrained from striking Lee with killing force when the opportunity presented itself because it could have earned him a prison sentence, but used illegal cufflings under his sleeves. According to Michael Dorgan's 1980 book *Bruce Lee's Toughest Fight*, the fight ended due to Lee's "unusually winded" condition, as opposed to a decisive blow by either fighter.[42] However, according to Bruce Lee, Linda Lee Cadwell, and James Yimm Lee, the fight lasted a mere three minutes with a decisive victory for Lee. In Cadwell's account, "The fight ensued, it was a no-

holds-barred fight, it took three minutes. Bruce got this guy down to the ground and said 'Do you give up?' and the man said he gave up".[41] A couple of weeks after the bout, Lee gave an interview claiming that he had defeated an unnamed challenger, which Wong says was an obvious reference to him.[42][44] In response, Wong published his own account of the fight in the Chinese *Pacific Weekly*, a Chinese-language newspaper in San Francisco, with an invitation to a public rematch if Lee was not satisfied with the account. Lee did not respond to the invitation despite his reputation for violently responding to every provocation,[42] and

there were no further public announcements by either, though Lee continued to teach white people. Lee had abandoned thoughts of a film career in favour of pursuing martial arts. However, a martial arts exhibition on Long Beach in 1964 eventually led to the invitation by television producer William Dozier for an audition for a role in the pilot for "Number One Son" about Lee Chan, the son of Charlie Chan. The show never materialized, but Dozier saw potential in Lee.[45]

1966 to 1970: American roles and creating Jeet Kune Do

Publicity photo of Williams and Lee for The Green Hornet

From 1966 to 1967, Lee played the role of Kato alongside the title character played by Van Williams in the TV series produced and narrated by William Dozier[46] titled *The Green Hornet*, based on the radio show by the same name.[47][45] The show lasted only one season (26 episodes) from

September 1966 to March 1967. Lee and Williams also appeared as their characters in three crossover episodes of *Batman*, another William Dozier-produced television series.[48][49][50]

The Green Hornet introduced the adult Bruce Lee to an American audience, and became the first popular American show presenting Asian-style martial arts. The show's director wanted Lee to fight in the typical American style using fists and punches. As a professional martial artist, Lee refused, insisting that he should fight in the style of his expertise. At first, Lee moved so fast that his movements could

not be caught on film, so he had to slow them down.[51] After the show was cancelled in 1967, Lee wrote to Dozier thanking him for starting "my career in show business."[51]

In 1967, Lee played a role in one episode of *Ironside*.

The Jeet Kune Do emblem is a registered trademark held by the Bruce Lee Estate. The Chinese characters around the Taijitu symbol read: "Using no way as way" and "Having no limitation as limitation" The arrows

represent the endless interaction between yang and yin.[52]

Jeet Kune Do originated in 1967. After filming one season of *The Green Hornet*, Lee found himself out of work and opened The Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute. The controversial match with Wong Jack Man influenced Lee's philosophy about martial arts. Lee concluded that the fight had lasted too long and that he had failed to live up to his potential using his Wing Chun techniques. He took the view that traditional martial arts techniques were too rigid and formalized to be practical in scenarios of chaotic street fighting. Lee

decided to develop a system with an emphasis on "practicality, flexibility, speed, and efficiency". He started to use different methods of training such as weight training for strength, running for endurance, stretching for flexibility, and many others which he constantly adapted, including fencing and basic boxing techniques. Lee was influenced by heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, whose footwork he studied and incorporated into his own style.[53]

Lee emphasized what he called "the style of no style". This consisted of getting rid

of the formalized approach which Lee claimed was indicative of traditional styles. Lee felt that even the system he now called Jun Fan Gung Fu was too restrictive, and it eventually evolved into a philosophy and martial art he would come to call *Jeet Kune Do* or the *Way of the Intercepting Fist*. It is a term he would later regret, because Jeet Kune Do implied specific parameters that styles connote, whereas the idea of his martial art was to exist outside of parameters and limitations.[54]

At the time, two of Lee's martial arts students were Hollywood script writer

Stirling Silliphant and actor James Coburn. In 1969, the three worked on a script for a film called *The Silent Flute*, and went together on a location hunt to India. The project was not realised at the time, but the 1978 film *Circle of Iron*, starring David Carradine, was based on the same plot. In 2010, producer Paul Maslansky was reported to have planned and received funding for a film based on the original script for *The Silent Flute*.[55] In 1969, Lee made a brief appearance in the Silliphant-penned film *Marlowe*, where he played a hoodlum hired to intimidate private detective Philip Marlowe, (played by James Garner), who uses his martial arts

abilities to commit acts of vandalization to intimidate Marlowe.[56][57] The same year, he was credited as the karate advisor in *The Wrecking Crew*, the fourth installment of the Matt Helm comedy spy-fi film starring Dean Martin.[58] Also that year, Lee acted in one episode of *Here Come the Brides* and *Blondie*.[59][60]

In 1970, he was responsible for fight choreography for *A Walk in the Spring Rain* starring Ingrid Bergman and Anthony Quinn, again written by Silliphant.[61][62]

1971 to 1973: Hong Kong films and Hollywood breakthrough

In 1971, Lee appeared in four episodes of the television series *Longstreet*, written by Silliphant. Lee played Li Tsung the martial arts instructor of the title character Mike Longstreet (played by James Franciscus), and important aspects of his martial arts philosophy were written into the script.[63][64] According to statements made by Lee, and also by Linda Lee Cadwell after Lee's death, in 1971 Lee pitched a television series of his own tentatively titled *The Warrior*, discussions of which were also confirmed by Warner Bros. During a December 9, 1971 television interview on *The Pierre Berton Show*, Lee stated that both Paramount and

Warner Brothers wanted him "to be in a modernized type of a thing, and that they think the Western idea is out, whereas I want to do the Western".[65] According to Cadwell, however, Lee's concept was retooled and renamed *Kung Fu*, but Warner Bros. gave Lee no credit.[66] Warner Brothers states that they had for some time been developing an identical concept,[67] created by two writers and producers, Ed Spielman and Howard Friedlander in 1969,[68] as stated too by Lee's biographer Matthew E. Polly.[69] According to these sources, the reason Lee was not cast was in part because of his ethnicity, but more so because he had

a thick accent.[70] The role of the Shaolin monk in the Wild West was eventually awarded to then-non-martial-artist David Carradine. In *The Pierre Berton Show* interview, Lee stated he understood Warner Brothers' attitudes towards casting in the series: "They think that business-wise it is a risk. I don't blame them. If the situation were reversed, and an American star were to come to Hong Kong, and I was the man with the money, I would have my own concerns as to whether the acceptance would be there".[71]

Producer Fred Weintraub had advised Lee to return to Hong Kong and make a feature

film which he could showcase to executives in Hollywood.[72] Not happy with his supporting roles in the US, Lee returned to Hong Kong. Unaware that *The Green Hornet* had been played to success in Hong Kong and was unofficially referred to as "The Kato Show", he was surprised to be recognized as the star of the show.[73] After negotiating with both Shaw Brothers Studio and Golden Harvest, Lee signed a film contract to star in two films produced by Golden Harvest.

Lee played his first leading role in *The Big Boss* (1971), which proved to be an enormous box office success across Asia

and catapulted him to stardom. He soon followed up with *Fist of Fury* (1972), which broke the box office records set previously by *The Big Boss*. Having finished his initial two-year contract, Lee negotiated a new deal with Golden Harvest. Lee later formed his own company, Concord Production Inc., with Chow. For his third film, *Way of the Dragon* (1972), he was given complete control of the film's production as the writer, director, star, and choreographer of the fight scenes. In 1964, at a demonstration in Long Beach, California, Lee met karate champion Chuck Norris. In *Way of the Dragon* Lee introduced Norris to moviegoers as his opponent, their

showdown has been characterized as "one of the best fight scenes in martial arts and film history".[74][75] The role had originally been offered to American karate champion Joe Lewis.[76] *Fist of Fury* and *Way of the Dragon* went on to gross an estimated US$100 million and US$130 million worldwide, respectively.[77]

From August to October 1972, Lee began work on his fourth Golden Harvest film *Game of Death*. He began filming some scenes, including his fight sequence with 7 ft 2 in (218 cm) American basketball star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, a former student. Production stopped in November 1972

when Warner Brothers offered Lee the opportunity to star in *Enter the Dragon*, the first film to be produced jointly by Concord, Golden Harvest, and Warner Bros. Filming began in Hong Kong in February 1973 and was completed in April 1973.[78] One month into the filming, another production company, Starseas Motion Pictures, promoted Bruce Lee as a leading actor in *Fist of Unicorn*, although he had merely agreed to choreograph the fight sequences in the film as a favour to his long-time friend Unicorn Chan. Lee planned to sue the production company, but retained his friendship with Chan.[79] However, only a few months after the

completion of *Enter the Dragon*, and six days before its July 26, 1973 release, Lee died. *Enter the Dragon* would go on to become one of the year's highest-grossing films and cement Lee as a martial arts legend. It was made for US$850,000 in 1973 (equivalent to $4 million adjusted for inflation as of 2007).[80] *Enter the Dragon* went on to gross an estimated $350 million worldwide.[81][82] The film sparked a brief fad in martial arts, epitomised in songs such as "Kung Fu Fighting" and some TV shows.

1978 to present: Posthumous work

Bruce Lee's star at the Avenue of Stars, Hong Kong.

Robert Clouse, the director of *Enter the Dragon*, together with Golden Harvest, revived Lee's unfinished film *Game of Death*. Lee had shot over 100 minutes of footage, including out-takes, for *Game of Death* before shooting was stopped to allow him to work on *Enter the Dragon*. In addition to Abdul-Jabbar, George Lazenby, Hapkido master Ji Han-Jae, and another of Lee's students, Dan Inosanto, were also

to appear in the film, which was to culminate in Lee's character, Hai Tien (clad in the now-famous yellow track suit[83][84]) taking on a series of different challengers on each floor as they make their way through a five-level pagoda. In a controversial move, Robert Clouse finished the film using a look-alike and archive footage of Lee from his other films with a new storyline and cast, which was released in 1978. However, the cobbled-together film contained only fifteen minutes of actual footage of Lee (he had printed many unsuccessful takes)[85] while the rest had a Lee look-alike, Kim Tai Chung, and Yuen Biao as stunt double. The

unused footage Lee had filmed was recovered 22 years later and included in the documentary *Bruce Lee: A Warrior's Journey*.

Bruce Lee's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame

Apart from *Game of Death*, other future film projects were planned to feature Lee at the time. In 1972, after the success of *The Big Boss* and *Fist of Fury*, a third film

was planned by Raymond Chow at Golden Harvest to be directed by Lo Wei, titled *Yellow-Faced Tiger*. However, at the time, Lee decided to direct and produce his own script for *Way of the Dragon* instead. Although Lee had formed a production company with Raymond Chow, a period film was also planned from September–November 1973 with the competing Shaw Brothers Studio, to be directed by either Chor Yuen or Cheng Kang, and written by Yi Kang and Chang Cheh, titled *The Seven Sons of the Jade Dragon*.[86]

In 2015, Perfect Storm Entertainment and Bruce Lee's daughter, Shannon Lee,

announced that the series *The Warrior* would be produced and would air on the Cinemax and filmmaker Justin Lin was chosen to direct the series.[87] Production began on October 22, 2017 in Cape Town, South Africa. The first season will contain 10 episodes.[88] In April 2019, Cinemax renewed the series for a second season.[89]

Unproduced works

Lee had also worked on several scripts himself. A tape containing a recording of Lee narrating the basic storyline to a film tentatively titled *Southern Fist/Northern*

Leg exists, showing some similarities with the canned script for *The Silent Flute* (*Circle of Iron*).[90] Another script had the title *Green Bamboo Warrior*, set in San Francisco, planned to co-star Bolo Yeung and to be produced by Andrew Vajna who later went on to produce *First Blood*.[79] Photoshoot costume tests were also organized for some of these planned film projects.

Artistry

Philosophy

While best known as a martial artist, Lee also studied drama and Asian and Western philosophy starting while a student at the University of Washington. He was well-read and had an extensive library dominated by martial arts subjects and philosophical texts.[91] His own books on martial arts and fighting philosophy are known for their philosophical assertions, both inside and outside of martial arts circles. His eclectic philosophy often mirrored his fighting beliefs, though he was quick to claim that his martial arts were solely a metaphor for such teachings. He believed that any knowledge ultimately led to self-knowledge, and said

that his chosen method of self-expression was martial arts.[92] His influences include Taoism, Jiddu Krishnamurti, and Buddhism.[93] Lee's philosophy was very much in opposition to the conservative worldview advocated by Confucianism.[94] John Little states that Lee was an atheist. When asked in 1972 about his religious affiliation, he replied, "none whatsoever",[95] and when asked if he believed in God, he said, "To be perfectly frank, I really do not."[92]

Poetry

Aside from martial arts and philosophy, which focus on the physical aspect and self-consciousness for truths and principles,[96] Lee also wrote poetry that reflected his emotion and a stage in his life collectively.[97] Many forms of art remain concordant with the artist creating them. Lee's principle of self-expression was applied to his poetry as well. His daughter Shannon Lee said, "He did write poetry; he was really the consummate artist."[98] His poetic works were originally handwritten on paper, then later on edited and published, with John Little being the major author (editor), for Bruce Lee's works. Linda Lee Cadwell (Bruce Lee's

wife) shared her husband's notes, poems, and experiences with followers. She mentioned "Lee's poems are, by American standards, rather dark—reflecting the deeper, less exposed recesses of the human psyche".[99] Most of Bruce Lee's poems are categorized as anti-poetry or fall into a paradox. The mood in his poems shows the side of the man that can be compared with other poets such as Robert Frost, one of many well-known poets expressing himself with dark poetic works. The paradox taken from the Yin and Yang symbol in martial arts was also integrated into his poetry. His martial arts and philosophy contribute a great part to his

poetry. The free verse form of Lee's poetry reflects his famous quote "Be formless ... shapeless, like water."[100]

Death



Bruce Lee is buried next to his son Brandon at Lake View Cemetery in Seattle.

On May 10, 1973, Lee collapsed during an automated dialogue replacement session for *Enter the Dragon* at Golden Harvest in

Hong Kong. Suffering from seizures and headaches, he was immediately rushed to Hong Kong Baptist Hospital, where doctors diagnosed cerebral edema. They were able to reduce the swelling through the administration of mannitol. The headache and cerebral edema that occurred in his first collapse were later repeated on the day of his death.[101]

On July 20, 1973, Lee was in Hong Kong to have dinner with actor George Lazenby, with whom he intended to make a film. According to Lee's wife Linda, Lee met producer Raymond Chow at 2 p.m. at home to discuss the making of the film

Game of Death. They worked until 4 p.m. and then drove together to the home of Lee's colleague Betty Ting Pei, a Taiwanese actress. The three went over the script at Ting's home, and then Chow left to attend a dinner meeting.[102][103]

Later, Lee complained of a headache, and Ting gave him the painkiller Equagesic, which contained both aspirin and the tranquilizer meprobamate. Around 7:30 p.m., he went to lie down for a nap. When Lee did not come for dinner, Chow came to the apartment, but he was unable to wake Lee up. A doctor was summoned, and spent ten minutes attempting to revive

Lee before sending him by ambulance to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Lee was declared dead on arrival at the age of 32.[104]

There was no visible external injury; however, according to autopsy reports, Lee's brain had swollen considerably, from 1,400 to 1,575 grams (a 13 percent increase). The autopsy found Equagesic in his system. On October 15, 2005, Chow stated in an interview that Lee died from an allergic reaction to the tranquilizer meprobamate, the main ingredient in Equagesic, which Chow described as an ingredient commonly used in painkillers.

When the doctors announced Lee's death, it was officially ruled a "death by misadventure".[105][106]

Lee's wife Linda returned to her hometown of Seattle, and had Lee's body buried in Lake View Cemetery in Seattle.[107][108] Pallbearers at Lee's funeral on July 25, 1973 included Taky Kimura, Steve McQueen, James Coburn, Dan Inosanto, Peter Chin, and Lee's brother Robert.[109] Around the time of Lee's death, numerous rumors appeared in the media.[110] Lee's iconic status and untimely death fed many wild rumors and theories. These included murder involving the triads and a

supposed curse on him and his family, rumors that persist to the present day.[111]

Donald Teare, a forensic scientist, recommended by Scotland Yard, who had overseen over 1,000 autopsies, was assigned to the Lee case. His conclusion was "death by misadventure" caused by cerebral edema due to a reaction to compounds present in the combination medication Equagesic.[112] Although there was initial speculation that cannabis found in Lee's stomach may have contributed to his death, Teare said it would "be both 'irresponsible and irrational' to say that [cannabis] might have triggered either the

events of Bruce's collapse on May 10 or his death on July 20".[112] Dr. R. R. Lycette, the clinical pathologist at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, reported at the coroner hearing that the death could not have been caused by cannabis.[112]

At the 1975 San Diego Comic-Con convention, Lee's friend Chuck Norris attributed his death to a reaction to the combination of the muscle-relaxant medication he had been taking since 1968 for a ruptured disc in his back and an "antibiotic" he was given for his headache on the night of his death.[113] In a 2017 episode of the Reelz TV series *Autopsy:*

The Last Hours of..., forensic pathologist Dr. Michael Hunter theorized that Lee died of adrenal crisis brought on by the overuse of cortisone, which Lee had been taking since injuring his back in a 1970 weightlifting mishap.[114] Hunter believes that Lee's exceptionally strong "drive and ambition" played a fundamental role in the martial artist's ultimate demise.[114]

In a 2018 biography, author Matthew Polly consulted with medical experts and theorized that Lee died from cerebral edema caused by over-exertion and heat stroke; and heat stroke was not considered at the time because it was

then a poorly-understood condition.[115] Furthermore, Lee had his underarm sweat glands removed in late 1972, in the apparent belief that underarm sweat was unphotogenic on film.[114] Polly further theorized that this caused Lee's body to overheat while practicing in hot temperatures on May 10 and July 20, 1973, resulting in heat stroke that in turn exacerbated the cerebral edema that led to his death.[115]

Legacy



Bruce Lee statue in Hong Kong

Jeet Kune Do, a hybrid martial arts philosophy drawing from different combat disciplines that was founded by Lee, is often credited with paving the way for modern mixed martial arts (MMA).[116][117] Lee is considered by commentators, critics, media, and other martial artists to be the most influential martial artist of all time[118][119][120] and a pop culture icon of the 20th century, who bridged the gap between East and West.[121][122]

He is credited with helping to change the way Asians were presented in American films[3] and was largely responsible for launching the "kung fu craze" of the 1970s.[123][124] He initially introduced kung fu to the West with American television shows such as *The Green Hornet* and *Kung Fu*,[124] before the "kung fu craze" began with the dominance of Hong Kong martial arts films in 1973.[123] Lee's success subsequently inspired a wave of Western martial arts films and television shows throughout the 1970s–1990s (launching the careers of Western martial arts stars such as Jean-Claude Van Damme, Steven Seagal and Chuck Norris), as well as the

more general integration of Asian martial arts into Western action films and television shows during the 1980s–1990s.[124] *Enter the Dragon* has been cited as one of the most influential action films of all time. Sascha Matuszak of *Vice* said *Enter the Dragon* "is referenced in all manner of media, the plot line and characters continue to influence storytellers today, and the impact was particularly felt in the revolutionizing way the film portrayed African-Americans, Asians and traditional martial arts."[125] Kuan-Hsing Chen and Beng Huat Chua cited fight scenes in Lee's films such as *Enter the Dragon* as being influential for the

way they pitched "an elemental story of good against evil in such a spectacle-saturated way".[126]

The concept of mixed martial arts was popularized in the West by Bruce Lee via his system of Jeet Kune Do. Lee believed that "the best fighter is not a Boxer, Karate or Judo man. The best fighter is someone who can adapt to any style, to be formless, to adopt an individual's own style and not following the system of styles." In 2004, Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) founder Dana White called Lee the "father of mixed martial arts" and stated: "If you look at the way Bruce Lee trained, the way

he fought, and many of the things he wrote, he said the perfect style was no style. You take a little something from everything. You take the good things from every different discipline, use what works, and you throw the rest away".[127] Numerous fighters in combat sports were inspired by Lee. For example, boxing champion Sugar Ray Leonard said he perfected his jab by watching Lee, boxing champion Manny Pacquiao compared his fighting style to Lee, and UFC champion Conor McGregor also compared himself to Lee and said that he believes Lee would've been a champion in the UFC if he were to compete in the present day.[128] American

full-contact kickboxing pioneer Benny Urquidez was inspired to enter martial arts tournaments after he watched Bruce Lee's demonstration at Long Beach in 1964.[129] American taekwondo pioneer Jhoon Goo Rhee learnt from Lee what he calls the "accupunch", which he incorporated into American taekwondo; Rhee later coached heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali and taught him the "accupunch", which Ali used to knockout Richard Dunn in 1975.[40] According to heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson, "everyone wanted to be Bruce Lee" in the 1970s.[130] UFC pound-for-pound champion Jon Jones also cited Lee as

inspiration,[131] with Jones known for frequently using the oblique kick to the knee, a technique that was popularized by Lee.[132] Numerous other UFC fighters have cited Lee as their inspiration, with several referring to him as a "godfather" or "grandfather" of MMA.[133]

In Japan, the manga and anime franchises *Fist of the North Star* (1983–1988) and *Dragon Ball* (1984–1995) were inspired by Lee films such as *Enter the Dragon*.[134][135] In turn, *Fist of the North Star* and especially *Dragon Ball* are credited with setting the trends for popular shōnen manga and anime from the 1980s onwards.[136][137]

Similarly in India, Lee films had an influence on Bollywood masala films;[138] after the success of Lee's films such as *Enter the Dragon* in India,[139] *Deewaar* (1975) and later Bollywood films incorporated fight scenes inspired by 1970s Hong Kong martial arts films up until the 1990s.[140] Bruce Lee films such as *Game of Death* and *Enter the Dragon* were also the foundation for video game genres such as beat 'em up action games and fighting games.[141][142] The early beat 'em up game *Kung-Fu Master* (1984) was originally based on Bruce Lee's *Game of Death*.[143] The *Street Fighter* video game franchise (1987 debut) was inspired by

Enter the Dragon, with the gameplay centered around an international fighting tournament, and each character having a unique combination of ethnicity, nationality and fighting style; *Street Fighter* went on to set the template for all fighting games that followed.[144] In April 2014, Lee was named a featured character in the combat sports video game *EA Sports UFC*, and is playable in multiple weight classes.[145] Numerous sports and entertainment figures have cited Lee as an inspiration, including actors such as Jackie Chan[146] and Eddie Murphy,[147] actresses Olivia Munn and Dianne Doan, musicians such as Steve Aoki and Rohan

Marley, rapper LL Cool J, comedians Eddie Griffin and W. Kamau Bell, basketball players Stephen Curry and Jamal Murray, skaters Tony Hawk and Christian Hosoi, UFC champions Uriah Hall and Anderson Silva, and American football player Kyler Murray, among others.[146]

Honors

Hong Kong Film Awards for 'Lifetime Achievement Award 1994.[148]

Star of the Century Award 2004[149]

Golden Horse Awards Best Mandarin Film 1972

Fist of Fury Special Jury Award 1972[148]

Lee was named by *Time* as one of the 100 most influential people of the 20th century.[3] In April 2013, he was posthumously awarded the prestigious Founders Award at The Asian Awards.[150]

A theme park dedicated to Lee was built in Jun'an, Guangdong. Mainland Chinese only started watching Bruce Lee films in the 1980s, when videos of classic movies like *The Chinese Connection* became available. Films like *Enter the Dragon* and *Fists of Fury* were banned by Mao as spiritual pollution and rightist sentimentality.[151]

On January 6, 2009, it was announced that Lee's Hong Kong home (41 Cumberland Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong) would be preserved and transformed into a tourist site by Yu Pang-lin.[152][153] Yu died in 2015 and this plan did not materialize.[154] In 2018, Yu's grandson, Pang Chi-ping, said: "We will convert the mansion into a centre for Chinese studies next year, which provides courses like Mandarin and Chinese music for children."[155]

Statues

- Statue of Bruce Lee (Los Angeles): unveiled June 15, 2013,[156] Chinatown

Central Plaza, Los Angeles, California

- Statue of Bruce Lee (Hong Kong): 2.5 m (8.2 ft) bronze statue of Lee was unveiled on November 27, 2005 on what would have been his 65th birthday.[157]
- Statue of Bruce Lee (Mostar): The day before the Hong Kong statue was dedicated, the city of Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina unveiled its own 1.68 m (5.5 ft) bronze statue; supporters of the statue cited Lee as a unifying symbol against the ethnic divisions in the country, which had culminated in the 1992–95 Bosnian War.[158]

Martial arts and fitness

Bruce Lee	
Style	**Jeet Kune Do** (founder) Épée Fencing, Boxing,[17] Wing Chun,[159] Judo,[160] Wrestling,[160] misc. Chinese martial arts and various other styles by personal tutoring and research.
Teacher(s)	Ip Man, Wong Shun Leung, "Brother Edward",[17] Gene LeBell, others
Notable students	Jesse Glover, James

DeMile, Linda Lee Cadwell, Dan Inosanto, Taky Kimura, Ted Wong, James Yimm Lee, Joe Lewis, Mike Stone, Gene LeBell, Chuck Norris, Steve McQueen, Roman Polanski, Sharon Tate, James Coburn, Brandon Lee, Kareem

Lee's first introduction to martial arts was through his father, from whom he learned the fundamentals of Wu-style t'ai chi ch'uan.[161]

The largest influence on Lee's martial arts development was his study of Wing Chun.[159] Lee was 16 years old under the Wing Chun teacher Yip Man in between late 1956 and 1957 after losing to rival gang members. Yip's regular classes generally consisted of the forms practice, *chi sao* (sticking hands) drills, wooden dummy techniques, and free-sparring. There was no set pattern to the classes.[22]

At 172 cm (5 ft 8 in) and weighing 64 kg (141 lb) at the time,[162] Lee was renowned for his physical fitness and vigor, achieved by using a dedicated fitness regimen to become as strong as possible. After his

match with Wong Jack Man in 1965, Lee changed his approach toward martial arts training. Lee felt that many martial artists of his time did not spend enough time on physical conditioning. Lee included all elements of total fitness—muscular strength, muscular endurance, cardiovascular endurance, and flexibility. He used traditional bodybuilding techniques to build some muscle mass, though not overdone, as that could decrease speed or flexibility. At the same time, with respect to balance, Lee maintained that mental and spiritual preparation are fundamental to the

success of physical training in martial arts skills. In *Tao of Jeet Kune Do* he wrote:

> *Training is one of the most neglected phases of athletics. Too much time is given to the development of skill and too little to the development of the individual for participation. ... JKD, ultimately is not a matter of petty techniques but of highly developed spirituality and physique.*[163]

Lee also favored cross-training between different fighting styles, and had a particular interest in grappling.[164] After befriending accomplished grappler Gene LeBell on the set of *The Green Hornet*, Lee offered to teach him striking arts in exchange for being taught judo and wrestling techniques.[160][165] He also trained with other judokas in Seattle and California, and expressed to LeBell a wish to integrate judo into his fighting style.[164] Although Lee opined grappling was of little use on action choreography because it was not visually distinctive,[165] he did showcase grappling moves in his own films, such as *Way of the Dragon*, where his

character finishes his opponent with a neck hold inspired by LeBell,[160] and *Enter the Dragon*, whose prologue features Lee submitting an opponent with an armbar.[164]

According to Linda Lee Cadwell, soon after he moved to the United States, Lee started to take nutrition seriously and developed an interest in health foods, high-protein drinks, and vitamin and mineral supplements. He later concluded that achieving a high-performance body was akin to maintaining the engine of a high-performance automobile. Allegorically, as one could not keep a car running on low-

octane fuels, one could not sustain one's body with a steady diet of junk food, and with "the wrong fuel", one's body would perform sluggishly or sloppily.[166] Lee also avoided baked goods and refined flour, describing them as providing empty calories that did nothing for his body.[167] He was known for being a fan of Asian cuisine for its variety, and often ate meals with a combination of vegetables, rice, and fish. Lee had a dislike for dairy products and as a result, used powdered milk in his diet.[168]

Personal

Names

Lee's Cantonese birth name was Lee *Jun-fan* (李振藩).[169] The name homophonically means "return again", and was given to Lee by his mother, who felt he would return to the United States once he came of age.[170] Because of his mother's superstitious nature, she had originally named him *Sai-fon* (細鳳), which is a feminine name meaning "small phoenix".[31] The English name "Bruce" is thought to have been given by the hospital attending physician, Dr. Mary Glover.[171]

Lee had three other Chinese names: Lee Yuen-cham (李源鑫), a family/clan name;

Lee Yuen-kam (李元鑒), which he used as a student name while he was attending La Salle College, and his Chinese screen name Lee Siu-lung (李小龍; *Siu-lung* means "little dragon"). Lee's given name Jun-fan was originally written in Chinese as 震藩; however, the *Jun* (震) Chinese character was identical to part of his grandfather's name, Lee Jun-biu (李震彪). Hence, the Chinese character for *Jun* in Lee's name was changed to the homonym 振 instead, to avoid naming taboo in Chinese tradition.

Family

Lee and his family

Lee's father, Lee Hoi-chuen, was one of the leading Cantonese opera and film actors at the time and was embarking on a year-long opera tour with his family on the eve of the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong. Lee Hoi-chuen had been touring the United States for many years and performing in numerous Chinese communities there.

Although many of his peers decided to stay in the US, Lee Hoi-chuen returned to Hong Kong after Bruce's birth. Within months, Hong Kong was invaded and the Lees lived for three years and eight months under Japanese occupation. After the war ended, Lee Hoi-chuen resumed his acting career and became a more popular actor during Hong Kong's rebuilding years.

Lee's mother, Grace Ho, was from one of the wealthiest and most powerful clans in Hong Kong, the Ho-tungs. She was the half-niece of Sir Robert Ho-tung,[172][173] the Eurasian patriarch of the clan. As such, the young Bruce Lee grew up in an affluent

and privileged environment. Despite the advantage of his family's status, the neighborhood in which Lee grew up became overcrowded, dangerous, and full of gang rivalries due to an influx of refugees fleeing communist China for Hong Kong, at that time a British Crown Colony.[31]

Grace Ho is reported as either the adopted or biological daughter of Ho Kom-tong (Ho Gumtong, 何甘棠) and the half-niece of Sir Robert Ho-tung, both notable Hong Kong businessmen and philanthropists.[172] Bruce was the fourth of five children:

Phoebe Lee (李秋源), Agnes Lee (李秋鳳), Peter Lee, and Robert Lee.

Linda Lee Caldwell in 1998

Grace's parentage remains unclear. Linda Lee, in her 1989 biography *The Bruce Lee Story*, suggests that Grace had a German father and was a Catholic.[74] Bruce Thomas, in his influential 1994 biography *Bruce Lee: Fighting Spirit*, suggests that Grace had a Chinese mother and a German father.[174] Lee's relative Eric Peter

Ho, in his 2010 book *Tracing My Children's Lineage*, suggests that Grace was born in Shanghai to a Eurasian woman named Cheung King-sin.[174] Eric Peter Ho said that Grace Lee was the daughter of a mixed race Shanghainese woman and her father was Ho Kom Tong. Grace Lee said her mother was English and her father was Chinese.[175] Fredda Dudley Balling said Grace Lee was three-quarters Chinese and one-quarter British.[176]

In the 2018 biography *Bruce Lee: A Life*, Matthew Polly identifies Lee's maternal grandfather as Ho Kom-tong, who had often been reported as his adoptive

grandfather. Ho's father, Mozes Hartog Bosman, was a Dutch Jewish businessman from Rotterdam.[177] He moved to Hong Kong with the Dutch East India Company and served as the Dutch consul to Hong Kong at one time. He had a Chinese concubine named Sze Tai with whom he had six children, including Ho Kom Tong. Bosman subsequently abandoned his family and immigrated to California.[178] Ho Kom Tong became a wealthy businessman with a wife, 13 concubines, and a British mistress who gave birth to Grace Ho.[179][180][181]

His younger brother Robert Lee Jun-fai is a notable musician and singer, his group The Thunderbirds were famous in Hong Kong.[182][183][184] A few singles were sung mostly or all in English. Also released was Lee singing a duet with Irene Ryder.[185] Lee Jun-fai lived with Lee in Los Angeles in the United States and stayed. After Lee's death, Lee Jun-fai released an album and the single by the same name dedicated to Lee called *The Ballad of Bruce Lee*.[186]

With his son Brandon in 1966

While studying at the University of Washington he met his future wife Linda Emery, a fellow student studying to become a teacher, whom he married in August 1964. Lee had two children with Linda: Brandon (1965–1993) and Shannon Lee (born 1969). Upon's Lee passing in 1973, she continued to promote Bruce Lee's martial art Jeet Kune Do. She wrote the 1975 book *Bruce Lee: The Man Only I*

Knew, on which the 1993 feature film *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* was based.[187] In 1989, she wrote the book *The Bruce Lee Story*. She retired in 2001 from the family estate.

Lee died when his son Brandon was eight years old. While alive, Lee taught Brandon martial arts and would invite him to visit sets. This gave Brandon the desire to act and went on to study the craft. As a young adult, Brandon Lee found some success acting in action-oriented pictures such as *Legacy of Rage* (1986), *Showdown in Little Tokyo* (1991), and *Rapid Fire* (1992). In 1993, at the age of 28, Brandon Lee died

after being accidentally shot by a prop gun on the set of *The Crow*.

Lee died when his daughter Shannon was four. In her youth she studied Jeet Kune Do under Richard Bustillo, one of her father's students; however, her serious studies did not begin until the late 1990s. To train for parts in action movies, she studied Jeet Kune Do with Ted Wong.[188]

Friends, students, and contemporaries

Lee's brother Robert with his friends Taky Kimura, Dan Inosanto, Steve McQueen,

James Coburn, and Peter Chin were his pallbearers.[189] Coburn was a martial arts student and a friend of Lee. Coburn worked with Lee and Stirling Silliphant on developing *The Silent Flute*. Upon Lee's early death, at his funeral Coburn gave a eulogy.[189] McQueen was also a martial arts student and a friend of Lee. Both were very competitive of their success. Lee made no secret that he wanted everything McQueen had and would stop at nothing to get it.[190][191][192] Inosanto and Kimura were friends and disciple of Lee. Inosanto who would go on to train Lee's son Brandon.[193][194] Kimura continued to teach Lee's craft in Seattle.[195] According

to Lee's wife, Chin was a lifelong family's friend and a student of Lee.[196]

James Yimm Lee (no relation) was one of Lee's three personally certified 3rd rank instructors and co-founded the Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute in Oakland where he taught Jun Fan Gung Fu in Lee's absence. James was responsible for introducing Lee to Ed Parker, the organizer of the Long Beach International Karate Championships, where Lee was first introduced to the martial arts community.[197]

Hollywood couple Roman Polanski and Sharon Tate studied martial arts with Lee. Polanski flew Lee to Switzerland to train him. Tate studied with Lee in preparation for her role in *The Wrecking Crew*. After Tate was murdered by the Manson Family, Polanski initially suspected Lee.[198]

Screenwriter Stirling Silliphant was a martial arts student and a friend of Lee.[199][200] Silliphant worked with Lee and James Coburn on developing *The Silent Flute*.[201] Lee acted and provided his martial arts expertise in several projects penned by Silliphant, the first in *Marlowe* (1969) where Lee plays Winslow Wong a

hoodlum well versed in martial arts, Lee also did fight choreographies for the film *A Walk in the Spring Rain* (1970), and Lee played Li Tsung a Jeet Kune Do instructor who teaches the main character in the television show *Longstreet* (1971), included in the script were elements of his martial arts philosophy.[56][57][61][62][63][64]

Basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar studied martial arts and developed a friendship with Lee.[61]

Actor and karate champion Chuck Norris was a friend and training partner of Lee's.[202] After Lee's passing, Norris said

he kept in touch with Lee's family, and that their sons Eric Norris and Brandon became friends.[203]

Judoka and professional wrestler Gene LeBell became a friend of Lee on the set of *The Green Hornet*. They trained together and exchanged their knowledge of martial arts.[160][165]

Filmography

Advertising

Though Bruce Lee did not appear in commercials during his lifetime, Nokia launched an internet-based campaign in

2008 with staged "documentary-looking" footage of Bruce Lee playing ping-pong with his nunchaku and also igniting matches as they are thrown toward him. The videos went viral on YouTube, creating confusion as some people believed them to be authentic footage.[204]

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See also

- Bruce Lee Library
- List of stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame – Bruce Lee at 6933 Hollywood Blvd
- *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*
- *The Legend of Bruce Lee*
- Bruce Lee (comics)
- Bruceploitation

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